From: Quirarte-Ortiz, Cecilia **Sent:** Mon 12/8/2014 5:46:53 PM Subject: RE: OPA Daily Digest 12/5/14 Posted. From: Washburn, Ben Sent: Friday, December 05, 2014 3:39 PM To: R7 Daily Digest Group Subject: OPA Daily Digest 12/5/14 OPA Daily Digest for 12/05/14 **Congressional Inquiries:** None **State Government Inquiries:** None **Press Inquiries:** Wall Street Journal – John Emshwiller – 10/31/14: Questions regarding West Lake site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

KSN-TV (Wichita) – Darren Dedo – 11/17/14: Requesting status updates and interviews for

To:

Washburn, Ben[washburn.ben@epa.gov]

Wichita Superfund sites. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

**St. Louis Post-Dispatch -** Jacob Barker – 11/21/14: Requesting interview about West Lake Landfill. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

**KWMU St. Louis Public Radio** – Veronique LeCapra – 12/5/14 – Inquired about USGS study results and when they will be released. Contact: David Bryan, 7433 (closed)

Freelancer – Jack Suntrup – 12/5/14 – Checking to see if Coastal Energy negotiations have come to fruition. Contact: David Bryan, 7433 (open)

#### **Environmental Stories:**

Des Moines Register - Researchers: Prairie strips can reduce nutrient loss - 12/3/14 - The first year that prairie strips were strategically planted in corn and soybean fields near the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, they worked to reduce loss of nutrients that can impair water quality, says Matt Helmers, an agricultural and biosystems engineer at Iowa State University. <a href="http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2014/12/03/researchers-prairie-strips-reduce-nutrient-loss/19801989/">http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2014/12/03/researchers-prairie-strips-reduce-nutrient-loss/19801989/</a>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

**Des Moines Register - Nitrate levels hit record highs in 2 D.M. rivers -** 12/5/14 - Nitrate levels at record highs in the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers over the past three months have forced the Des Moines Water Works to again use its nitrate removal facility, the agency said Thursday. <a href="http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2014/12/04/high-nitrates-des-moines/19906717/">http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2014/12/04/high-nitrates-des-moines/19906717/</a>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Times-Picayune, New Orleans - EPA fighting order that it decide on Gulf of Mexico 'dead zone' rule making - 12/4/14 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency wants the federal appeals court in New Orleans to overturn an order that forces the EPA to decide whether federal rules are needed to curb the flow of pollutants into the Mississippi River. http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2014/12/epa fighting order forcing it.html

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Safety systems shut down Callaway nuclear plant - 12/3/14 - Safety systems at Ameren Missouri's nuclear power plant in Callaway County unexpectedly kicked in and shut down the plant early Wednesday morning, federal regulators said. <a href="http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/safety-systems-shut-down-callaway-nuclear-plant/article\_99d2628c-e650-53ac-af30-92c8d17a6220.html">http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/safety-systems-shut-down-callaway-nuclear-plant/article\_99d2628c-e650-53ac-af30-92c8d17a6220.html</a>

Wichita Business Journal - Koch Industries slams tax break package - 12/4/14 - In a letter written "on behalf of Koch Industries," Koch Companies Public Sector lobbyist Philip Ellender was highly critical of a package of tax breaks under consideration by the U.S. House of Representatives. <a href="http://www.bizjournals.com/wichita/morning\_call/2014/12/koch-industries-slams-tax-break-package.html">http://www.bizjournals.com/wichita/morning\_call/2014/12/koch-industries-slams-tax-break-package.html</a>

**Kansas City Business Journal - KC is now a 'Climate Action Champion' -** 12/4/14 - Kansas City can add another honor to its list: Climate Action Champion The White House and the U.S. Department of Energy on Wednesday announced that 16 cities, including Kansas City, had earned the newly created award.

http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/blog/morning\_call/2014/12/kc-is-now-a-climate-actionchampion.html

**Lincoln Journal-Star (Neb.) - Boeing conducts first flight using 'green diesel'** - 12/4/14 - Boeing completed the first test flight using "green diesel," a fuel blend of oils and fats already used in trucks and other ground transportation. Boeing officials have said the use of green diesel for jets is a "major breakthrough" in the industry's quest to wean itself off fossil fuels and reduce harmful emissions. <a href="http://journalstar.com/business/local/boeing-conducts-first-flight-using-green-diesel/article\_07cd655e-10a0-545c-a7bd-e475bb25ed29.html">http://journalstar.com/business/local/boeing-conducts-first-flight-using-green-diesel/article\_07cd655e-10a0-545c-a7bd-e475bb25ed29.html</a>

Associated Press - Des Moines activates water nitrate removal system - 12/4/14 - High nitrate levels in the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers have forced Des Moines Water Works to turn on an expensive nitrate removal system. <a href="http://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-water-nitrate-removal-system/article\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-particle\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-moines-activates-particle\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-particle\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-particle\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-particle\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/des-particle\_f8928c5f-1b65-57d6-regional/iowa/de

Associated Press - Alliant moving ahead with demolition of plant - 12/4/14 - Alliant Energy is moving ahead with the demolition of its Sixth Street Generating Station near downtown Cedar Rapids. The plant has been a fixture in Cedar Rapids since it began providing electricity in 1888. <a href="http://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/alliant-moving-ahead-with-demolition-of-plant/article\_6de4898f-cd1e-5afb-bf87-f1abfc070c40.html">http://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/alliant-moving-ahead-with-demolition-of-plant/article\_6de4898f-cd1e-5afb-bf87-f1abfc070c40.html</a>

**WatchDog - Nebraska town looking for help** - 12/2/14 - Yutan Fire Chief Paul Rupp, along with nearly half a million folks in 11 eastern Nebraska counties, found out eight weeks ago what top state officials had known for several months: Millions of gallons of dangerous and potentially deadly oil train shipments hauled by Burlington Northern Santa Fe — critics call them "bomb trains — are traveling through their backyards every week. <a href="http://watchdog.org/184067/yutan-deadly-oil/?roi=echo3-23887347354-24011720-07f1426aea1ee2aa8ccb1be628880fca">http://watchdog.org/184067/yutan-deadly-oil/?roi=echo3-23887347354-24011720-07f1426aea1ee2aa8ccb1be628880fca</a>

Hays Daily News - Goodman Energy Center expansion moves forward - 12/4/2014 - Midwest Energy is moving forward with a \$30 million expansion of the Goodman Energy Center in Hays, enabling the plant to accommodate load growth in the area while remaining a reliable backup generation source to wind generation resources in the region. <a href="http://hdnews.net/news/goodmanweb120414">http://hdnews.net/news/goodmanweb120414</a>

Wichita Eagle - Wichita City Council to vote on water rate increases - 12/3/14 - Water and sewer rates are expected to rise for Wichita customers starting Jan. 1. The city's sewer fund is stressed because of increased projects to meet Kansas Department of Health and Environment standards, said Alan King, director of public works, and it's being carried financially by the water fund. <a href="http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article4258409.html">http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article4258409.html</a>

**Lake News Online - New EPA/DNR regulations could lead to higher bills -** 12/1/14 - With the addition of 115,732 miles of protected streams, along with tougher limits on levels of ammonia allowed in treated wastewater discharges, Missouri's sewer treatment plants will have to invest a significant amount of money to make improvements. http://www.lakenewsonline.com/article/20141201/News/141209911

**Digital Journal - Free Water Systems provides Rainwater Collection Tanks for Watershed Committee of the Ozarks Project -** 12/2/14 - Missouri State University and Watershed Committee of the Ozarks construct 20,000 gallon rainwater collection system in Springfield. <a href="http://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/2373439">http://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/2373439</a>

Ag Professional - ICGA calls for more clarity following EPA action on renewable fuels - 12/2/14 - The Iowa Corn Growers Association said the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) announcement amounts to another non-decision on a high-priority issue that impacts Iowa farmers and America's economy. <a href="http://www.agprofessional.com/news/icga-calls-more-clarity-following-epa-action-renewable-fuels">http://www.agprofessional.com/news/icga-calls-more-clarity-following-epa-action-renewable-fuels</a>

Missouri Times (Press Release) - Senator Blunt Urges EPA To Withdraw Proposed Rule That Would Raise Energy Costs For Vulnerable Missourians & Reduce Missouri's Competitiveness - 12/2/14 - "Missouri electric service providers have warned that the CPP would increase energy costs for Missourians and reduce our state's economic competitiveness," Blunt wrote. <a href="http://themissouritimes.com/15158/press-release-senator-blunt-urges-epa-withdraw-proposed-rule-raise-energy-costs-vulnerable-missourians-reduce-missouris-competitiveness/">http://themissouritimes.com/15158/press-release-senator-blunt-urges-epa-withdraw-proposed-rule-raise-energy-costs-vulnerable-missourians-reduce-missouris-competitiveness/</a>

EnergyWire - Behind the noise, central states study EPA rule cooperation - 12/3/14 - Amid the barrage of public criticism, political sword-rattling and legal challenges that surround U.S. EPA's proposed Clean Power Plan, a group of environmental regulators and utility commissioners from 14 states has been quietly at work in the background, in search of ways to cooperate on implementation. <a href="http://www.eenews.net/energywire/stories/1060009833">http://www.eenews.net/energywire/stories/1060009833</a>

Environmental Protection - State Lawmakers Support EPA Carbon Reduction Efforts - 12/4/14 - Two hundred fifty-nine state legislators from across the nation submitted a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency supporting the EPA's efforts to reduce carbon dioxide pollution and urging the EPA to increase its renewable energy and efficiency goals. <a href="http://eponline.com/articles/2014/12/04/state-lawmakers-support-epa-carbon-reduction-efforts.aspx">http://eponline.com/articles/2014/12/04/state-lawmakers-support-epa-carbon-reduction-efforts.aspx</a>

**Fox News - 'Game we can't win': Coal states brace for growing number of plant closures over EPA rules -** 12/5/14 - The energy industry and coal-producing states are projecting a wave of power plant closures in the final two years of the Obama administration as Environmental Protection Agency regulations take hold. The energy industry and coal-producing states are projecting a wave of power plant closures in the final two years of the Obama administration as

### Environmental Protection Agency regulations take hold.

http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2014/12/05/coal-power-plant-closures/

**Associated Press - Little backing in Congress for Obama climate moves -** 12/4/14 - When Republicans take control of both houses of Congress next month, President Barack Obama will be hard-pressed to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions dramatically — a promise he made to Americans and the world and a key to his legacy. <a href="http://www.wral.com/little-backing-in-congress-for-obama-climate-moves/14239360/">http://www.wral.com/little-backing-in-congress-for-obama-climate-moves/14239360/</a>

Reuters - Powerful antibiotic for cows often misused by farmers - 12/4/14 - The strength of the antibiotic ceftiofur — and the frequency with which it's being misused on farms across America — has created a threat to human health that may overshadow the drug's effectiveness, a Reuters examination shows. <a href="http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/powerful-antibiotic-for-cows-often-misused-by-farmers/article\_95e2a4b9-8d91-5c87-be40-9c0e07d3eb05.html">http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/powerful-antibiotic-for-cows-often-misused-by-farmers/article\_95e2a4b9-8d91-5c87-be40-9c0e07d3eb05.html</a>

The Hill - EPA Clean Power Plan is the right thing to do (blog) - 12/4/14 - New superhighways may soon cross the Midwest. But they won't transport cars. They'll carry clean wind energy from the nation's blustery plains states. They will also help stabilize volatile electricity costs. <a href="http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-environment/225731-epa-clean-power-plan-is-the-right-thing-to-do">http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-environment/225731-epa-clean-power-plan-is-the-right-thing-to-do</a>

BNA - EPA Clean Power Plan to Cut Reliability, Cost Billions of Dollars, FERC's Philip Moeller Says - 12/3/14 - A federal energy regulator issued a harsh critique of the Environmental Protection Agency's clean power plan, predicting it will threaten electric grid reliability and cost billions of dollars to implement. http://www.bna.com/epa-clean-power-n17179917922/

BNA - EPA, Corps May Withdraw Interpretive Rule On Permit-Exempt Conservation Practices - 12/4/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers haven't ruled out the option of withdrawing a non-binding interpretive rule that outlines agricultural conservation practices that would be exempt from Clean Water Act dredge-and-fill permits due to the confusion it has caused among farmers and ranchers, an Agriculture Department official said Dec. 3. <a href="https://www.bna.com/epa-corps-may-n17179917976/">https://www.bna.com/epa-corps-may-n17179917976/</a>

Climate Central - How Winters Are Changing Throughout the U.S. - 12/5/14 - In the big

picture, the U.S. has seen a number of climate shifts in the cold season over the past 40 years or so. Since 1970, the average winter temperature in the continental U.S. has warmed by 2.4°F since 1970. That's faster than the planet as a whole. <a href="http://www.climatecentral.org/news/winter-climate-trends-18409">http://www.climatecentral.org/news/winter-climate-trends-18409</a>

Seeking Alpha (blog) - Ethanol - It's About The Economics, Stupid - 12/3/14 - The US ethanol market remains tight, keeping stocks in an uptrend. Profitability is high for ethanol producers right now. But recent production increases and a delay by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in updating the amount of ethanol to be used in the US will likely create some uncertainty in the near term. <a href="http://seekingalpha.com/article/2726835-ethanol-its-about-the-economics-stupid">http://seekingalpha.com/article/2726835-ethanol-its-about-the-economics-stupid</a>

U.S. World & News Report - Opinion: Boon or Bust? States, Businesses Take Sides on Clean Power Plan - 12/2/14 - Proponents and opponents offer economic arguments on the controversial proposed climate rule. <a href="http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/12/02/boon-or-bust-states-businesses-take-sides-on-clean-power-plan">http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/12/02/boon-or-bust-states-businesses-take-sides-on-clean-power-plan</a>

Washington Post - Evangelicals add support for EPA plan to cut coal pollution - 12/2/14 - Evangelicals are teaming up with environmentalists to support the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan to substantially reduce carbon dioxide emissions from coal-burning power plants. <a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/evangelicals-add-support-for-epa-plan-to-cut-coal-pollution/2014/12/02/2631b738-7a62-11e4-8241-8cc0a3670239\_story.html">http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/evangelicals-add-support-for-epa-plan-to-cut-coal-pollution/2014/12/02/2631b738-7a62-11e4-8241-8cc0a3670239\_story.html</a>

Fed Scoop (blog) - Configuration management deficiencies put EPA at risk - 12/4/14 - Administrators for the Environmental Protection Agency's networks must focus on improving its configuration management program, according to a recent report from the agency's inspector general. <a href="http://fedscoop.com/configuration-management-deficiencies-put-epa-risk-oig/">http://fedscoop.com/configuration-management-deficiencies-put-epa-risk-oig/</a>

Radio Iowa - DNR hopes aeration will help fish survive winter conditions - 12/4/14 - Several northwestern and north-central Iowa lakes are now equipped with winter aeration systems to keep oxygen levels from dropping during the winter. <a href="http://www.radioiowa.com/2014/12/04/dnr-hopes-aeration-will-help-fish-survive-winter-conditions/">http://www.radioiowa.com/2014/12/04/dnr-hopes-aeration-will-help-fish-survive-winter-conditions/</a>

DeSmogBlog - BLM Hasn't Performed An Environmental Review of Coal Leasing

**Program Since 1979** - 12/4/14 - It has been 35 years since the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) last performed an environmental review of its coal leasing program. Two environmental groups are suing the BLM to force a review of the program.

 $\frac{http://www.desmogblog.com/2014/12/04/blm-has-not-performed-environmental-review-coal-leasing-program-1979}{}$ 

Think Progress - The Strange Thing About Google's Decision To Stop Renewable Energy Research - 12/4/14 - Two senior Google engineers have written a confusing article explaining what they learned after Google stopped its advanced research and development effort into renewable energy technologies in 2011.

http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2014/12/04/3597629/google-engineers-climate-change/

Bloomberg - Why Elon Musk's Batteries Scare the Hell Out of the Electric Company - 12/4/14 - Elon Musk's so-called gigafactory may soon become an existential threat to the 100-year-old utility business model. The facility will also churn out stationary battery packs that can be paired with rooftop solar panels to store power. <a href="http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-12-05/musk-battery-works-fill-utilities-with-fear-and-promise.html">http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-12-05/musk-battery-works-fill-utilities-with-fear-and-promise.html</a>

05/musk-battery-works-fill-utilities-with-fear-and-promise.html
Press Releases:
Link to all R7 press releases: <a href="http://go.usa.gov/Qx5">http://go.usa.gov/Qx5</a>
None
Fact Sheets:
Link to all R7 fact sheets: <a href="http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets">http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets</a>
None

**Upcoming Administrator/RA Events:** 

* New additions noted with an asterisk
12/4/14 – Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) St. Louis Project Brownbag, Regional Office. Contact: Monica Espinosa, 7541
*12/8/14 – Meet with Colonel Mitchell, USACE, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: Lynn Slugantz, 7883
*12/9/14 – Meet with Missouri State Senator Mike Kehoe, Jefferson City, Mo. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071
*12/10/14 – Meet with Missouri State Senator Kurt Schaefer, Columbia, Mo. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071
12/15-16/14 – Joint Region 7 & Region 8 Ag Meeting, Denver, Colo. Contact: Damon Frizzell, 7560
*1/7/15 – American Soybean Association Leadership College, St. Louis, Mo. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782
*2/3/15 – Air and Waste Management Association – 23 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Environmental Conference, Overland Park, Kan. Contact: Becky Weber, 7487
DRA:
None

RA/Immediate Office
None
Other Events
AWMD
None
CNSL
None
ECO/EJ
None
ENSV
None
PLMG
12/09/14 – Society of American Military Engineers National Conference, Kansas City, MO. Contact: Chester Stovall, x7549
Contact. Chester Stovan, x1345
RA/OPA
None
SUPR
JUI N

None
WWPD
12/9/14 – Meeting with Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782
12/15-16/14 – Joint Region 7 & Region 8 Ag Meeting, Denver, Colo. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782
12/8-12/14 – EPA Water Quality Standards Academy training, Washington, DC. Contact: Pete Davis, 7372
Des Moines Register
Researchers: Prairie strips can reduce nutrient loss
Donnelle Eller
December 3, 2014
The first year that prairie strips were strategically planted in corn and soybean fields near the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, they worked to reduce loss of nutrients that can impair water quality, says Matt Helmers, an agricultural and biosystems engineer at Iowa State University.

"Things like plant diversity — the diversity of the prairie — have changed over time, evolved and enhanced," Helmers said. "But water quality, we saw real benefits right from the beginning. It was surprising. We weren't sure we'd see dramatic benefits."

Those dramatic benefits Helmers and other researchers discovered: Converting just 10 percent of a crop field into prairie could reduce by 95 percent the soil and sediment leaving the field. Phosphorus loss decreased by 90 percent, and nitrogen loss by 85 percent. And the prairie created a habitat for pollinators, birds and animals.

What happens is that the "thick-stemmed vegetation" that comes with a prairie's native grasses, flowers and other plants "slows down the flow of water and allows the water to infiltrate."

Researchers are looking at four different row crop and prairie configurations in 12 sloping fields. One treatment is all corn or soybeans, another is 10 percent prairie at the foot of the slope, another adds a few prairie strips to the field with prairie at the foot, totaling 10 percent prairie, and the last adds strips to the foot slope, totaling 20 percent prairie.

About a dozen state and federal conservation and agricultural agencies are participating in the project, including the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

With Iowa under pressure to reduce the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that enters the state's waterways and eventually contributes to the Gulf of Mexico's dead zone, Helmers talked about how the research program — officially called Science-based Trials of Row-crops Integrated with Prairie Strips — fits into the state's plan to reduce water pollution.

# Q. How did the research project begin?

A. About 10 years ago, some folks were interested in what we could do within the agricultural landscape to reduce, on the water quality side, some of the nutrient and sediment exported from that land, as well as enhance the biodiversity on the landscape. ... We wondered: Can we convert a small part of the landscape into a prairie cover and see disproportionate benefits?

Q. Was it an immediate success, or did it require some t	tweaking?
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A. Our field sites are in Jasper County, near the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge on land owned by the refuge. We implemented the treatments in 2007 and then in 2008 we had a lot of rain, but we still saw dramatic benefits from a water quality standpoint in that first year.

#### Q. That first year, what kind of vegetation did you have?

A. That's where it would depend, each site would be different. We had some clover and blue grass and probably a little bromegrass that was there from before. But you still some small stands of switchgrass, Indian grass, bluestem, there would have been some annual weeds in their, too, that would have provided some resistance to that water flow.

# Q. How many rows are taken out of production?

A. Some strips might have been 20-foot wide, 25-foot wide. Some might have taken 10 rows out of production for an individual strip.

# Q. Has it been a cost-effective way to improve water quality?

A. It's quite cost-effective. We're talking \$24 to \$35 an acre. We're taking 10 percent of the land out of production.

Q. How does that compare to cover crops, which a lot of people are considering? Are the benefits similar?

A. We're getting similar benefits. There are advantages and disadvantages to each one. Cover crops may be similar in costs per acre.

#### Q. What do you hear from farmers about the project? What do they like — and don't like?

A. One of the factors is still the cost. It's a cost to the producer, even if they get into federal incentive-type programs. And there's a hassle factor. ... Why are they interested? It definitely provides water quality benefits and other environmental benefits as well — aesthetic benefits, some habitat for wildlife, birds, pollinators, plant diversity. It's not just the water-quality benefit but other benefits, too, to that landowner and society at large.

### Q. Do you have to be an organic farmer to use prairie strips?

A. No, no. At our research site, many of the farmers that have implemented the strips to date are not organic farms. They spray next to the prairie strip, but they are able to spray and keep from killing the prairie. It's been implemented on organic and non-organic operations.

#### Q. How does this project fit into the state's nutrient reduction strategy?

A. I think it's another tool, another option that farmers have to help reduce nutrients leaving their fields. It specifically does a good job with phosphorus and sediment in runoff. Nitrates that are moving primarily with water that's moving through the root zone and through shallow groundwater or tile, it may not be as effective in that, but it's very effective for reducing surface water runoff, reducing sediment loss in the field, and phosphorus loss in the field. To me it's another practice that farmers can think about and evaluate for their operation to help us meet the goals in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

Q. The project was recently written about in the New York Times. Why are are so many people interested in project?

A. There is a growing interest in what can we do on our agricultural lands to reduce nutrient loss, to provide environmental benefits. People see this as one of the options that farmers can use. People are engaged and interested in practices that can put on the land that can have a measurable and substantial impact on providing water quality benefits, other environmental benefits. And people who have been involved have seen the results. They've been out there. They've seen how we've monitored it, they've seen how we're evaluating it, and have confidence in that.

### Q. What's next for the project?

A. Phase One was at Neal Smith. Phase Two is to go out on producers' fields. ... With that, we're trying to evaluate the project under a wider range of conditions — some flatter, some steeper sites. We will have added 15 to 20 farmer sites by the end of the year, early next year. ... Certainly, there is a lot more outreach to do, but we're pretty excited about how many farmers are interested.

#### **FOR MORE**

For more information, go to: <a href="https://www.nrem.iastate.edu/research/STRIPs">www.nrem.iastate.edu/research/STRIPs</a>

**Des Moines Register** 

Nitrate levels hit record highs in 2 D.M. rivers

By Donnelle Eller

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Nitrate levels at record highs in the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers over the past three months have forced the Des Moines Water Works to again use its nitrate removal facility, the agency said Thursday.

"Des Moines Water Works staff has employed extensive efforts to mitigate nitrate levels, but ... we were left with no alternative but to activate the nitrate removal facility," said Bill Stowe, CEO of Des Moines Water Works, in a statement.

Nitrate levels in September, October and November were the highest ever experienced in those months and "have required extraordinary efforts," the agency said. "Use of the nitrate removal facility is the last step available to maintain safe drinking water."

Higher concentrations of nitrates are more common in the spring, when excessive rain washes unused fertilizer from farm fields into streams.

The agency used the nitrate removal facility for 74 days in 2013, an effort that cost consumers about \$900,000 in treatment costs and lost revenues.

Untreated high levels of nitrates in drinking water have been linked to blue baby syndrome, when a baby's blood can't carry sufficient oxygen, as well as to various cancers and miscarriages. The federal limit is 10 milligrams per liter nitrate in drinking water.

Current nitrate levels in the Raccoon River are 12.62 milligrams per liter, the agency said, and 11.63 milligrams per liter in the Des Moines River. With extensive treatment, the city's finished drinking water currently has a nitrate level of 8.79 milligrams per liter, the agency said.

Nitrates occur naturally in the soil but can spike in water when manure and other fertilizers drain off lawns and farm fields and into waterways.

Stowe said the state's voluntary Nutrient Reduction Strategy, designed to reduce the amount of nitrogen and phosphorous that leaves farm fields, isn't working.

The state has pledged to reduce by 45 percent the nitrogen and phosphorous that enters waterways and contributes to high nitrates in cities such as Des Moines and to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. But the effort is voluntary, and there's no timetable to reach the goal.

"Continued but unfounded insistence from state leaders that the voluntary approach of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy is working does not give solace to the 500,000 central Iowans who must now pay to remove pollution from their drinking water," Stowe said.

"Further, the persistent argument that 'weather is to blame' for this situation is wrong," he said. "Science proves weather and other natural conditions do not create excessive nitrate concentrations. Intensive land use and extensive agricultural drainage systems are the source of the high nitrate in our source waters."

Officials have said the \$4 million nitrate-removal plant, installed in 1992, costs about \$7,000 a day to run. The Environmental Protection Agency had ordered Des Moines to act to remove nitrates after the contaminant exceeded the federal limit in tap water during the early 1990s.

Before starting up the facility Thursday, the agency said employees managed high nitrates by blending various water sources, including from a shallow groundwater collector system, Maffitt Reservoir, Crystal Lake, and aquifer storage and recovery wells.

In 2013, nitrate levels reached 24 milligrams per liter in the Raccoon and 17.87 milligrams per liter in the Des Moines.

#### Recent levels

The nitrate levels in the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers this fall are unprecedented for this time of the year, Des Moines Water Works says. The monthly averages are as follows:

	Raccoon River	<b>Des Moines River</b>
September	11.61milligrams per liter	7.20 milligrams per liter
October 2014	13.23 milligrams per liter	11.15 milligrams per liter
November 2014	13.25 milligrams per liter	11.88 milligrams per liter

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